Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: The elimination of Racism, Racial Discrimination & Xenophobia

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Introduction:

Racism is a lot of the time misunderstood as a feeling of superiority between races. However, it is a combination of the terms, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which are defined as irrational fear, animosity, and disdain toward people of different races and ethnicities respectively. Racial and ethnic discrimination is not a lightly taken topic, but rather an issue of daily lives. Such problems, which arise from the denial of one beings equality, otherwise known as human rights, has been a leading force of racial hatred and genocide, destroying lives of millions of people around the world. Political and economic frontiers between nations have decreased; cultural boundaries, however, have gotten worse due to continuous disagreements among people with different backgrounds.

Terrors such as “ethnic cleansing” were not only a problem in the past, but they still exist today. Ideas related to such events have been spread throughout the vast world of the Internet. South African Ethnic Cleansing, the large massacre that occurred May 11, 2008 and lasted for three weeks resulting in 80,000 displaced people and 670 injuries and casualties that include unarmed civilians.

Recognizing the intensity of the issue, the International Human Rights Organizations and other United Nations major organizations have placed the issue of racial and ethnic discrimination to a relatively high priority. The 2001 World Conference against Racism, produced a document called “The Durban Declaration of Program and Action”, which is the as the most authoritative program in order to make progress toward ending racism in the world. Subsequently, the 2009 Durban Review Conference was held to make sure the declaration was maintaining its standards and was functioning as well, if not better as it had when the 2001 conference was held.

Human rights, the ability to belong justifiably with everyone in the world, are completely contradictory to what racism and xenophobia do to the modern population. The history of the international efforts to eradicate racial and ethnic discrimination has been persistent; however so has history of hostiles toward racial and ethnic differences. Therefore the issue comes as more of a challenge. Despite the attention paid by the UN and other collaborating organizations, the dream of discrimination-free societies is completely achievable, but it shall take time and effort from supporting nations. Thus, it is not a consideration but confirmation that the issue of racial discrimination and xenophobia should continue to be addressed and with the UN and NGO’s support.

# Key Terms:

**Racism**

The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races

**Xenophobia**

An intense or irrational dislike/ fear of people from other countries

**Ethnic Cleansing**

Ethnic Cleansing is the act of compulsorily removing a particular group of people from an area in order to maintain the area’s “ethnic unity and purity.” It has been done usually through means of massacre

**Ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism refers to the inclination to make judgments on other cultures and related groups based on standards, norms, and criterions of one’s own culture

**Indirect (covert) Racial Discrimination**

Indirect (covert) Racial Discrimination refers to actions or policies that come out to be impartial and neutral, for they consider and treat people of different ethnicities and races in the same manner but adversely influence a higher share of a particular ethnic or racial groups. This may occur unintentionally

**Individual racism**

Individual Racism refers to the attitudes and behaviors that indicate racism done by individuals

**Institutional (or systemic) racism**

Institutional (Systematic) Racism occurs under institutions such as governments, and educational, legal, and medical enterprises or organizations, when such institutions discriminate against a group of people of certain races, ethnicities, or sometimes religions

**Anti-Semitism**

Anti-Semitism refers to hatred toward Jewish People

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As it has already been popularly established, the history of racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related intolerances trace back throughout the years. A large portion of scientists and socialists claim that the official starting point of racism is during the 19th century when the term “scientific racism” was used to provide a classification for humanity. Such ideas and means developed into racial theories and were abused by colonists, especially the Europeans, to justify their dissembling and controlling of colonized populations.

Ironically, during the 19th century, West European colonial powers engaged themselves in various actions to restrict the Arab slave trade in Africa, and ambassadors were dispatched to West Africa to suppress the trade. Likewise, colonialists were able to judge upon themselves as ethically deprived, yet persisted with their moral corruption in pursuit of their own advantages. It was also during the late 19th and the early 20th century when racism prevailed in the New World. White capping, an American movement of traditional values enforcement, marked by a notable anti-black characteristic, took its roots from Indiana in the later 19th century, and to all of North America by the early 20th century; this caused a number of African “working people” to depart from their lands.

The 20th century could even be called the peak of xenophobia, largely attributed by the work of the Nazi Germany. Under the reign of Adolf Hitler, Nazi Germany viewed Slavic people such as Ukrainians, Czechs, and Russians, Gypsies, Poles, Jewish, and any non-Aryan descendants as “sub-humans.” Under the absurd faith in their “super human heritage,” the Nazis believed themselves to be responsible for eliminating and displacing inferior humans and purifying their lands. During the Holocaust, estimated 6 million were murdered in various inhumane ways. The Nazis killed some 6 million Jewish People during the World War I and II periods; Japan actively involved itself in racial-free campaigns, and at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 Japan presented a treaty on racial equality. Along with Burma, China, and India, Japan held the Greater East Asia Conference in 1943, where the Asian countries determined to step up for the means of abolishing of any forms of racial discrimination.

In history, one of the most notable and condemnable practice of racism is the system of apartheid in South Africa during the mid- 1900s. When South Africa was under the English and Dutch powers, with the adoption of apartheid laws in 1948, racial discrimination was officially institutionalized. Under the Public Registration Act in 1950, people were divided into three categories, white, black (African), and colored (of mixed decent primarily Asians), and were required to act according to their races. Apartheid system interfered with every single aspect of people’s lives. Marriage between different races was strictly prohibited. Sanctioning of “white- only jobs” existed. Black was also obliged to carry their personal ID card called “pass books” when accessing non-black places.

In 1953, the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act were passed, which gave the government the power to declare a state of emergency and increased penalties for protesting against any law. Penalization included fines, imprisonment and whippings. In 1960, a large group of blacks in Sharpeville, South Africa, refused to carry their passes; the government declared a state of emergency. The emergency lasted for 156 days, leaving 69 people dead and 187 people wounded. Seeing as the white government had the power of the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, they had no intention of changing the unjust laws of apartheid.

**THE DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAM OF ACTION & THE DURBAN REVIEW CONFERENCE**

The 2001 World Conference against Racism (WCAR), also known as Durban I, was held in Durban, South Africa from August 31st to September 8th of 2001 under the United Nations’ active support. The foundational purpose of the conference was to eliminate any forms of racism along with five major themes;

“Theme 1: Sources, cause, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance;

Theme 2: Victims of racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance;

Theme 3: Measures of prevention, education and protection aimed at the eradication of racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance at the national, regional and international levels;

Theme 4: Provision for effective remedies, recourses, redress, and other measures at the national, regional and international levels;

Theme 5: Strategies to achieve full and effective equality, including international cooperation and enhancement of the United Nations and other international mechanisms in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia.”

The conference also addressed the issue of the indemnification of slavery and the actions of Israel regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When the conference attempted to consider Zionism as a form of racism, the delegations of the United States and Israel decided to sanction and cease their participation in the conference, claiming the conference was aiming at the hostile debate surrounding anti-Semitism. The withdrawal of the US and Israel seemed to announce the approach of the pulling back of the European states that other delegates voted against the inclusion of the issue that the withdrawn delegations opposed to; thus the final Declaration and Program of Action did not contain anything regarding Zionism. Also, the NGO forum of the conference that was held separately ended in discord with several NGOs’ withdrawal and criticism from other organizations including UN High Commissioner of Human Rights (UNHCHR). The language of the final Declaration and Program of Action produced during the World Conference was and is still debated on its unfair bias. However, it is considered as a landmark to the progress regarding the issue.

Following the Durban 1 Conference, the Durban Review Conference was organized under the mandate of United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/149 for the purpose of reviewing and ensuring the implementation of “The Durban Declaration and Program of Action” from the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. During the preparation of the review conference, several delegations including Australia, Canada, Israel, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, and the United States, boycotted the conference. The Czech Republic and twenty-three European nations refused to show their active involvement and support by either discontinuing their attendances or dispatching low-level delegations. The outcomes of the conference, which were concerned about the discrimination against minority groups, passed and were ensured for its implementation with the delegates’ consensus. Reaffirmation of the principles passed during the Durban I Conference in 2001 was also a part of the Durban Review Conference’s terms.

# INTERNATIONAL ACTION & UN INVOLVEMENT:

**International Involvement**

For the last sixty years ever since the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations has put the issue of racial and ethnic discrimination to that of importance; its foundation and the prohibition of racial discrimination and xenophobia are preserved in all core international human rights instruments. The international community has made some important advances in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, which include the pulling down of apartheid system in South Africa.

**United Nations and involved Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s)**

Today, the UN continues with its efforts to put peer pressure on states to involve in eradication of discrimination in both public and private spheres. The UN’s principle of equality also obliges member states to implement special regulations to get rid of conditions that are considered to be the primary reason for discrimination’s persistence in each country.

Under the cooperation of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, varying means for monitoring and strengthening equality among different ethnic and racial groups were established. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights’ sub-committee, a committee on the elimination of Racial Discrimination is one of the major organizations that promote the elimination of racism; it is the formation of independent experts that ensures each State adopts the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and provides feedback to any difficulties involved in the process. Geneva meetings regarding racism between member states also happened, with the absence of several World major powers.

Overall 136 UN resolutions regarding the issue of eradicating racism and related intolerance have been passed.

# THE ISSUE OF RACISM BETWEEN SPECIFIC GROUPS:

United States of America vs. Middle East

The current relationship between the United States and the Middle Eastern states is probably one of the most fragile and variable relationship among the world’s states of affairs today. Before 1941, the United States minimized its involvement in the Middle Eastern affairs. Starting from the Second World War and the Cold War, in fact, did the US threw itself into the region where it previously shunned, when the US realized that its losing of Middle East actually equalizes with its loss of natural resources, military forces, and means of communication. Since then, the US kept its interference in the frequent violence happening in Middle East, and rarely gained positive effects from its involvement: the Iran Hostage Crisis during 1979-1981, the Persian Gulf War during 1990-1991, and the Iraq War in 2003. Although there are allied relationships between the US and several Middle Eastern states including Israel, Jordan, and Kuwait, ethnic tension between people from two countries exists. Americans tend to view Middle Eastern People, as terrorist’s and Middle Easterners tend to view Americans as imperialists.

Israeli vs. Palestinian

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an explosive, detrimental dispute enduring even until today. The history of the conflict dates back to the period of the Ottoman Rule during the early 1900s. The official conflict started when the British gave the land of Palestine, where both Jewish people and Muslims believed to be the promise land and where a significant Jewish people were dwelling. It has been ongoing ever since, and no solid progress has been made. The remaining key issues include mutual recognition, water rights, frontiers, control of Jerusalem, freedom of movement and legalities of Palestinian refugees, and Israeli settlements. For its entire duration, violence never ended; violence was a regular conduct of paramilitary groups, regular armies, terrorists, and even individuals. An estimated 8,500 Jewish People were removed from their lands, half of them being forcibly moved. Following such violence in government and civilian levels, ethnic tensions increased.

# TIMELINE:

1800’s

Ever since the introduction of “scientific racism” in the mid-1800s, racist ideology was developed by the colonists to justify their colonial actions, thus became prevalent mostly among white people. Also, this was the period of racial ideologies emergence in America in the form of white capping, a civilian movement marked by anti-black characteristic.

1950’s

When practical actions and programs started to emerge. Convention on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, Protocol amending the convention to suppress the slave trade and slavery, and Convention on the abolition of slavery, the slave trade, and institutions and practices of slavery were implemented consecutively.

1990’s

The period 1990’ss was when the UN General Assembly came up with a plan for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and all related forms of racial intolerance in Durban, South Africa, and its following Durban Review Conference.

2000’s

As a result of the September 11 Attacks in the United States in 2002, the Iraq War in 2003, the break out of the war Gaza Strip, and the period 2000s turned out to be in turmoil with the tension between groups that have been receiving the world’s attention: the US, the Middle Easterners, Israelites, and Palestinians. However, it was also the decade when the World Conference on Racism and the Durban Review Conference was held in 2001 and 2009 respectively.

**Possible Solutions:**

It is not an easy task to end racism, and get rid of xenophobia; although it is possible in a variety of different ways. Man is not born racist; it is something that comes from learning. Exposure for the younger generation to cultural diversity, and to teach them about the ways different cultures work would be taking a large step toward the end of racism. The young generation has to come to a level of respect for another culture before they can stop being, or taking to the route of becoming a racist.

Getting rid of false stereotypes will be another step toward the end of racism. With false information floating around, about other cultures, races, and genders, people do not have a proper understanding of the other culture or race, therefore giving them opportunities to have ignorance toward the culture or race.

If not already created, an organization such as AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) but for people who feel there loved one has an overly racist personality, can send them to be taught about other cultures, and give them knowledge about other races and cultures, in order to be more informed.

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